Vol. VI. Numb. 78

THE OBSERVATOR.

The Country-man's *Continuation of his Account of our Losses and Disgraces at Sea, since* January *last; and his Remarks on* Fourbin's *Expedition, and taking our* Lisbon *Convoy: With an Account of a Letter from* Portsmouth, *hinting the Danger of it before that Convoy sail'd.*

From **Wednesday**, November 26. to **Saturday**, November 29. 1707.

Obs. I See you are loaded with Papers, *Roger*. What, be the foreign Mails come in?

Country-m. Yes, Master; but I must bargain with you to talk of no other Subject, 'till I have done with our *Losses and Disgraces* last Year, by Sea.

Obs. Well, *Roger*, you must have your Way; go on then.

Country-m. Look ye, Master, the *Daily Courant* has given us an Abstract of M. *de Fourbin*'s Journal, during his Expedition we talk'd of last Time; shall I read it?

Obs. Tell me the Substance of it, *Roger*.

Country-m. The Title of it is so insolent, that I must read it, Master: 'Tis thus, "A particular Re-"lation of the Count *de Fourbin*'s Voyage *North-*"*ward*, with a Squadron of the King's Ships fitted "out at *Dunkirk*, consisting of nine Frigats, from "40 to 56 Guns, after an Engagement in the "*Channel*, in which he took two *English* Men of "War of 72 Guns each, and 20 Vessels that were "under their Convoy, on the 13th of *May*, 1706.

Obs. That's insolent enough indeed, *Roger*, to bring in a Story of the 13th of *May*, into the Relation of a Voyage which did not begin 'till the 10th of *June* following. But that's done on Purpose to crow over us.

Country-m. I go on with the Substance of his Relation. He says, *The* 10*th of* June *we sail'd out of the Road of* Dunkirk *the second Time, and avoided* 10 English *Ships that lay to observe us without the Sands, by going out at the* Western *Passage*. Pray, Master, give me your Opinion of this? Why could not we have had more Men of War there, than 10? And why should not the *Western* Passage have been observ'd, as well as the *Eastern*? Or why should we have had no Scouts out, to have brought us Word when *Fourbin* did sail?

Obs. Truly, *Roger*, I know nothing of the Matter; but I will speak to such Parliament-men as I am acquainted with, to ask the Question; and I doubt not, but those concern'd in the Ships and Goods that M. *de Fourbin* took in the *Channel*, the 13th of *May*, N. S. and in the *North* Seas, in *July* following, will do the like to such as are of their Acquaintance.

Country-m. I will speak to my Representatives, Master; and they shall as soon have *Roger*'s Heart Blood, as his Vote at next Election, if they slubber over an Enquiry into those Things. But I go on. The Relation says, *The* 22*d of* July, *by seven in the Morning, we discover'd* 48 *or* 50 English *Ships to the Windward, convoy'd by three large Ships*. Now, Master, had I Authority to ask Questions, I would ask how it came to pass, we had no Intelligence all this While where *Fourbin* was gone, especially since the publick News gave us an Account, That two of his Ships put into *Gottenburgh*, or somewhere thereabouts, to refit? And if we had Intelligence, I would ask, why the Squadron that convoy'd the *Russia* Fleet part of their Way, did not find out and fight *Fourbin*? For I suppose, Master, *English* Eyes are as good as *French*; and that if we look out sharp, we may see *French* Men of War, as well as they can see *English* Merchant-men. I have been Part Owner of many Ships in my Time, Master, and always took Care to venture my Money with Masters and Captains that understood their Business.

Obs. Not too fast, *Roger*; you know not what Orders the Convoy had.

Country-m. Orders, Master! I would never trust any Man in a Post under me, whom I did not think fit to put discretionary Orders in Execution. I don't think that a safe Way of doing my Business; let them give an Account of their Orders then. Can you tell me, Master, of any Thing more important, that they were set about afterwards.

Obs. Not I, *Roger*. Pray go on with your Story.

Country-m. The Relation adds, Master, *That they took twenty of our Ships, and the* Blackwall (formerly one of our own, I suppose) *help'd to take five of 'em; that had the Wind been right all the Voyage, they had been at* Kilduin *three Weeks sooner, and then would have rang'd themselves so as to have taken all our* Russia *Fleet, and their Convoy*. This appears to have been the Design, Master; so that it was the Wind, and not their Intelligence or Eyes, that fail'd 'em.

Obs. Well, *Roger*, you find that afterwards they took 18 *Dutch* Ships bound to *Russia*, with a richer loading than ours; so that we are not alone in our Misfortunes.

Country-m. That's but small Comfort to us Master; I seldom hear that the *Dutch* are guilty of such Neglects; but supposing they were, must we follow their Examples? I am not afraid to say, that the *Hogan Mogans* may be out in their Measures and Management, as well as we; and that a War by Sea is more their Interest, than a War by Land, as well as it is ours.

Obs. How do you prove that, *Roger*?

Country-m. You have prov'd it for me, Master.

Obs. When, and where, *Roger*?

Country-m. In *Observator* of this Volume, Numb. 64. Master, where you told me, Pag. 2. Col. 1. "That the *Dutch West India* Company had former-"ly, by a vigorous War, so broke and exhausted "the *Spaniard* in that Part of the World, that he "seriously made honourable Offers of Peace, which "was desir'd by the trading Inhabitants, and all "the rest, but rejected by the Prince's Influence, "who still got their Taxes continu'd and heigh-"ten'd, and oppress'd them beyond their Abilities, "by unnecessary offensive Field-Armies.

Obs. Well, what of all that, *Roger*?

Country-m. Why, Master, we and the *Dutch* have not yet, by all our Land War, been able to bring the *Frenchify'd Spaniards* to such honourable Terms; which, I think, is a plain Proof, that a vigorous War by Sea, is the only Way to do it.

Obs. Well, *Roger*, I perceive I must take Care what I say before you, your Memory is so very good. But pray go on with your Account *of our Losses and Disgraces by Sea last Year?*

Country-m. I will, Master; that same Day, *viz. October* the 9th, we had Advice, That 44 Sail, bound from the *Texel*, to *London*, being dispers'd by a Tempest on the *Flemmish* Coast, 16 or 17 of 'em were carry'd into *Dunkirk*, *Newport*, and *Calais*, by the Privateers of those Places.

Obs. That was a great Loss to the *Hamburgh* Traders, *Roger*; but 'twas a Misfortune, and no human Power can help such Things.

Coun-

Country-m. That 'twas a Misfortune, will be readily own'd, Master; but the Question is, whether much of it might not have been prevented by good Conduct, *viz.* by having provided them with a Convoy before the stormy Season, and by having light small Ships arm'd on Purpose by private Adventurers, as we formerly discours'd. These would easily have kept off the small Vessels that took those Ships. I know, Master, the *Dutch* were to blame in not providing a better Convoy; but all this while, those Swarms of *French* and *Flemmish* Privateers, are the Effects of our not having maintain'd the Dominion of the narrow Seas, which as 'tis our Right, is absolutely necessary for our Safety. But I go on.

October the 11th, we had Advice from *Falmouth*, That two *Dutch* Capers brought in a *French* Ship from the *Havana*, laden with Snuff, who was separated by Storm from six others richly laden, from 24 to 40 Guns. This I take Notice of, Master, to shew how careful the *French* are to advance their *West India* Trade, which 'tis in our Power, as well as 'tis our Interest, to prevent; and so much the more, that the last foreign Mails bring us an Account, that the *French* King is come to an Agreement with the *Spaniards* about it, by which his Subjects has two thirds of the Trade of Export thither, and by Consequence must have the same Proportion of the Trade of Import from thence. But we shall talk more of this, when we come to discourse about our *West India* Trade, which our Noble Patriots, the Lords, have so seasonably taken into Consideration.

October the 23d, we had Advice, That a *French* Squadron of 14 Men of War, fell in with our *Lisbon* Convoy, in which Engagement the *Devonshire*, a third Rate, of 500 Men, and 80 Guns, was blown up, the *Cumberland*, another third Rate of the same Force, taken, as were the *Ruby* and *Chester*, fourth Rates, of 250 Men, and 54 Guns each, and the *Royal Oak*, a third Rate, of 500 Men, and 80 Guns, much damag'd, but escap'd. We have not yet any certain Account what Number of our Transports were taken, for *French* Letters vary as to the Number. This Loss and Disgrace, Master, affects me so much the more, because our publick Prints gave an Account of the great Rejoycings the *French* Court made upon it, and boasted, that it was the Result of the *French* King's own Contrivance with *Fourbin*; so that the Secret was not trusted with any Body that would betray it. At the same Time, it grieves me, that our Intelligence should be so defective, considering what Jealousies there were before the Fleet sail'd from *Portsmouth*, that they would be attack'd by the *French*, as a Friend of ours hinted to us, in a Letter from *Portsmouth*, when he complain'd of the Delays of Sailing, tho' the Wind had offer'd fair five times, and of the bad Condition of the Horses, by being so long on Board. Now, Master, had I Authority to ask Questions, I would enquire. 1. How it came to pass, that we could not have had a Squadron out to intercept *Fourbin*, as well as he could sail 800 Leagues, with the Effects and Prizes he took out of our *Russia* Fleet, and then join another Squadron, and take our *Lisbon* Convoy? 2. Whether we had any Intelligence of what Naval Force the *French* had in *Brest*? And of their Equipment? If we had, why did we not send a stronger Convoy? And if we had not, who is to blame for it? 3. Whether the People at the *Anchor* had any Complaints sent them from Persons on Board the Fleet, or concern'd in it, when they lay at *Portsmouth*, of the Delays of Sailing, and of their Fears of being intercepted by the *French*.

Obs. Take heed what you say, *Roger*; for many a stout Fellow has lost his Life by bulging upon an Anchor.

Country-m. You are very cautious, Master; I believe you are afraid of the *Crown-Office*, or of having your own Crown split, and your Kidneys bruis'd with the Clubs of Assassins, as my old Master was, poor Man: But I don't know what Hurt there is for me to say, that in our *Observator* of this Volume, Numb. 66. I told you, I had brought you a Letter from *Portsmouth*, complaining of the Delay of that Convoy for frivolous Reasons; and that the Complainer said, he had sent a Letter to those who had Authority to command a Redress, which was sent back to the Captain, who insulted him for it; And I now put you in Mind, Master, that the Gentleman said in his Letter, *One would think those Horses were sold to the* French; *and that to see such Noble Men of War, as were in that Harbour, as well as in a great many other Places besides, a doing nothing, while the* French *swept away every Thing from the Rocks of* Lisbon, *to the Coasts of* Muscovy, *is enough to tire* English *Patience.*

Obs. That Gentleman, *Roger*, writ perhaps with too much Passion. However, I am sorry, that the *French* got any of our Ships or Horses, tho' I won't be so uncharitable, as to say they were sold to them; or so little a Christian as to wish, if it be so, that the Sellers and their Money may perish together. Good Night, *Roger*.

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